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IMPORTANT NOTICE

Professor S H Butcher of the University of Edinburgh will lecture on the subject of **GREEK LITERARY CRITICISM** at Columbia University, on Tuesday, April 26th, and Thursday, April 28th, at 4:30 P M, in the Auditorium of Earl Hall. No tickets of admission are required, but the doors will be closed promptly at the beginning of each lecture.

Fourth Annual Meeting of the Latin Club

The twelfth regular meeting and the fourth annual meeting of The New York Latin Club is called for Saturday, May 7th, at 12 M, in the Hotel Albert, corner of University Place and Eleventh Street, New York. Professor Knapp, of Columbia University, will address the club. All persons who are interested, whether teachers of Latin or not, are cordially invited to be present. The plan is to serve luncheon (50 cents a plate for everybody) at 12 M promptly, so that there shall be no delay. The address will follow the luncheon, and adjournment will occur about 2 P M *thus leaving the afternoon still unbroken for those who attend.* Please send a postal card at once to the Sec'y, Mr A L Hodges, 309 W 101st, N Y, if you intend to be present, so that we may inform Mr Frenkel the proprietor of the hotel, how many to expect. *Please attend to this at once.*

The election of officers for the coming year will be held at this meeting.

H H BICE, *President*
A L HODGES, *Secretary*

THE AJAX OF SOPHOCLES

It seems only right that THE LEAFLET should make mention, at least, of the recent performance of a Greek Drama in New York City. In contrast to most performances of a similar character the *Ajax* as presented on March 24th, 25th, and 26th, was not a revival proceeding from within the sacred circle of the Uni-

versities or Colleges with its attendant train of archaeological details more or less faithfully reproduced, but a purely amateur undertaking, animated by the spirit of charity and patriotism. The proceeds of the performances went to a number of Settlements, and the actors were for the most part recruited from among the ranks of the Greek Colony in the city. Nevertheless, or perhaps for this reason, the production was one of the most impressive which the writer has had the good fortune to witness. An almost religious spirit seemed to pervade both the actors and the audience—an audience, by the way, which by no means was restricted to the Collegiate element. Greeks, it is true, at least on the last evening, were in the minority. But there were people aplenty who had never listened to the stately measure of Homer, not to mention Choric Poetry, and who nevertheless appeared to be deeply touched by the impressiveness of the old Greek Drama. If personal experience count for anything in these matters, the effect of the Drama must be called a most profound one. A number of my pupils of the senior grade listened to the performance with wrapt and breathless interest, and although they followed the play with nothing but Plumptre's translation in their hands, they did so with a surprising understanding.

THE LEAFLET is not the proper place for dramatic criticism. Yet I cannot but bear witness to the seriousness with which the actors, though called from all walks of life, had taken up the study of their lines, and to their sincere devotion to the success of the play. To the spectator there seemed to be no hitch anywhere. Especial mention, I think, is deserved by the achievements of Tecmessa, Odysseus, and Agamemnon, who stood out before their

fellow actors, not in good will, but in successful presentation. Too much praise, also, cannot be given to the Chorus. A large part of its success, though, is due to the efforts of the composer, whose music, whether ancient or not, was one long to be remembered.

But readers of our paper will perhaps be more interested in a comparison of the performances with the accepted ideas of what an ancient drama was like. Of course, the most distinctive feature of the ancient stage, the orchestra, was lacking. The *thymele*, therefore, appeared strangely out of place in front of the tent of Ajax. And the dances of the chorus around it emphasized rather than mitigated this incongruity. In the Ajax, however, this is less disturbing than it would be in other Sophoclean dramas since the chorus participates in the action proper to a greater extent than elsewhere. At any rate the choric parts were by no means lacking in dignity. How much of this impression is due to the modern music, I am not musical enough to decide. But to me its simple strains seemed by no means incongruous with the character of the words.

Less satisfactory was the impression made by the dance movements. The very slow time to which the chorus entered the stage with the beautiful song of greeting to Ajax, and of sorrow for his rumored misfortune, did not seem in keeping with the anapaestic rhythm of the libretto. Nor can the movements that accompanied the song "Oh far famed Salamis" be considered classical or even beautiful. Here, it seems to me, a study of the monuments or of Sittl's "Gebaerden" would have benefitted both the actor and the stage manager.

It is hardly necessary to mention that the pronunciation was the modern one throughout. Greatly to my surprise, this feature was far less detractive than I had expected. While it seemed somewhat strange to hear of "Telamonie pe," the sound of the line was for the most part sonorous enough even for high pretensions. But another feature of the decla-

mation was very disagreeable indeed. I refer to the modern accentuation. To hear a great number of the iambic trimeters turned into choliambics was a surprise indeed, and not at all a pleasant one. Here a concession to book learning would decidedly have been a great improvement. For the plain "limp" of such lines grated not only upon my own, classically trained ears, but also upon the unpracticed, and therefore, unspoiled and unprejudiced, ears of my students.

It is hard to see the necessity of cuts in a drama amounting to only 1,419 lines, except as a concession to the demands of amateur actors. Such as they were, however, they detracted very little from the beauty of the performance, having been made with great circumspection. It was always easy to pick up the thread, and no part of dramatic importance had fallen under the slaughter.

Scenery and stage management do not call for comment in this place. Both were satisfactory, if not in every detail correct. To name one graver aberration from the classical tradition, the Greek ships visible on the beach had their masts standing and their sails in stops.

But all this is not meant as unfriendly criticism. It only serves to show what allowance the classical scholar had to make and in what way he had to modify his expectations and views. Looking back upon the performance now, after a lapse of more than a week, all these details dwindle into insignificance compared with the really deep impression made by the play. Not for a moment did the interest flag, and when the last strain of the march accompanying the exodus of the chorus had died away, there lay a spell over the audience that found its deepest expression in the hushed silence, which only after several minutes gave way to an applause that was as fully deserved as it was willingly given. Not for a long time will the remembrance of this evening in the company of Sophocles vanish from my mind.

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